



## ***LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES: Part Two***

### **REBEKAH: LESSON 17**

Oh, my Heavens ... Those are my first thoughts as I read the story of Rebekah. My first words to describe her story are: Fascinating, romantic, sweet (yet weird), confusing, disappointing, and puzzling. I love her yet I'm confused by some of her actions. I admire her yet am shocked by how she handled some things. As I continued to study and read about her, it made more sense. Not that it excuses her behavior, but I could better relate to how she rationalized what she did. All in all, a very fun and enlightening study to do on a rainy morning, as I bundled up with a cup of coffee and a zillion books, pondering this woman's life. What better way to spend a rainy day ... am I right? 😊

I especially love the beginning of Rebekah's story and how she met her husband, Isaac. The chapter that describes that romantic encounter is the longest chapter in Genesis. (Did God do that for the hopeless romantics out there?) And there are a lot of "firsts" in her story, as you'll soon see.

#### **First Day**

1. Read Genesis 24:1-67. Because it's such a long chapter, we'll break it down into sections to observe and record some of the facts. After reading each section, note the facts that you think are significant.
  - a. Genesis 24:1-9
  - b. Genesis 24:10-15

c. Genesis 24:16-28

d. Genesis 24:29-49

e. Genesis 24:50-61

f. Genesis 24:62-67

2. So ... what are your first thoughts on the story? Questions? Comments?

The first time “love” is mentioned is in Genesis 22:2 speaking of a father’s love for his son (Abraham toward Isaac). We find the second mention here in our story, a man’s love for his wife. Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah as his wife (Genesis 25:20). No one knows how old Rebekah was, although most believe she was in her teens. (Some rabbinical writings claim that she was possibly 3 or 4 years old, but I don’t believe that could possibly be true. Just the fact that she could draw water for all those camels would seem to diffuse that idea!) Anyway, most scholars say there was probably about a 20-25 year difference in their ages. I was sad to read that Sarah died before she could meet the wife her beloved son would marry.

Just to help get the facts straight, her grandfather was Nahor, Abraham’s brother. Her father was Bethuel and her brother was Laban. This would make Rebekah and Isaac second cousins. It’s also important to note that this marriage is the first monogamous marriage on record. Way to go, Isaac and Rebekah! That’s all for now, but I’m looking forward to learning more about Rebekah this week. Hope you are too!

**Memory Verse of the Week:** “Then they called Rebekah and said to her, ‘Will you go with this man?’ and she said ‘I will go.’” Genesis 24:58

### **Second Day**

**Work on your memory verse.**

1. Some say this chapter focuses on “faith, hope, and love.” Why?
2. At this point, Abraham is 140 years old. God had blessed him in many ways, but he wanted to make sure the “right” girl was chosen to be his son’s bride, believing that God would keep His promise to him (Genesis 12:2). Why did Abraham NOT want a bride from Canaan (24: 6 and 8)?
3. Describe the servant’s devotion to his master. Are we given his name? This servant is often used as an example of the way we are called to serve the Lord. Can you explain why?
4. From our story so far, describe Rebekah and her character.
5. Why do you think the servant gave gifts to Rebekah, as well as the family?
6. What obstacles do you think Rebekah faced in making her decision to go with the servant?

7. Why do you think her family wanted her to remain home for ten days?
8. What does the story tell us about Rebekah's faith? Why did it take faith to say yes?

Weirsbe wrote, "Rebekah had an important decision: would she stay home with her family and continue to be a servant, or would she by faith believe the words of the servant and go be with Isaac; a man she had never seen? Certainly there were obstacles in the way: her brother wanted her to stay awhile; the trip would be long and difficult; Isaac was a pilgrim without a settled home; and she would have to leave her loved ones. The world often advises the sinner to wait, just as Laban advised his sister. We cannot help but admire her decisions: "I will go." This act of faith changed her life. She was changed from being a servant to being a bride, from the loneliness of the world to the joy of love and companionship, from her poverty into Isaac's wealth. Did she see all of Isaac's wealth? Of course not. But what she heard about him convinced her to go." In this story, many see a picture of Christ and His Church. Rebekah was a pure virgin, just as the church will be when the marriage in Heaven takes place (Revelation 19:7-8).

9. Her brother urged her to "wait" but by faith she decided to go. How does the enemy work the same way today? What obstacles do we encounter on our journey of faith?
10. How does Rebekah's example of decision and faith encourage or challenge you in a situation or issue you might be facing today?

**See you tomorrow, my friends!**

**Third Day****Work on your memory verse.**

1. Briefly read our story again in Genesis 24, concentrating on verses 58-67. What blessing does her family pray over her? (This blessing is still used today in many Jewish weddings.)

The journey is said to have been very long. John Phillips wrote, "From Abraham's home to the city of Nahor in Mesopotamia, he had a considerable journey before him. Northward he went up to the Jordan Valley and on past Damascus, then around the Fertile Crescent into the 'eye of the East' until at length, crossing the Euphrates, he reached his destination." So now, it was time to return.

2. On the long journey home, how do you think Rebekah might have been feeling? Do you think she asked the servants a hundred questions about Isaac, etc.?
3. Describe their meeting. What was Isaac doing? Do you think he knew where the servant had been?

Can there be a better beginning than Isaac and Rebekah had? Obviously ordained by God, two beautiful people who are faithful to their God, becoming one ... our hearts melt as they do whenever we read a good love story. But their story is not without pain or blemish, so let's not get too carried away!

4. Read Genesis 25:19-34. Let's pick up the story after Abraham dies. According to verse 21, Rebekah had a problem. What was it, and what did Isaac do about it?

5. They both knew that fulfillment of God's covenant promise demanded that Isaac and Rebekah have a son. After the Lord answered Isaac's prayer, what struggle did Rebekah experience? What did she do about it?
  
6. Isn't it great that this couple each took their burden to the Lord? What's your first response, as an individual, and as a couple (if you are one), when problems arise? What does 1 Peter 5:7 tell us to do? Is that your first, second, or third response ... ?
  
7. The struggle in her womb perplexed her. What do you think she was "feeling"? And how did God explain the situation?

Some scholars call the battle within her "the battle of two natures." In her barren condition, there was no such struggle, but the moment fruitfulness began, the struggle began, a spiritual "type" of Romans 7. Phillips wrote, "In its primary interpretation, the Lord's response had to do with the Israelite and Edomite races that would descend from Jacob and Esau and to their future fortunes in the world. But the narrative has a far deeper significance. It pictures the relationship between the two natures in the believer. The old nature is the older of the two for the simple reason that it was born first; the new nature does not arrive upon the scene until the new birth. The future, however, lies with the new nature. Ultimate victory is assured for the new nature." The two boys still represent opposing principles. Jacob was a quiet man who stayed at home; Esau was a man for the world, full of vigor and adventure. Esau had no spiritual appetite though, which was the problem. He'd rather feed his flesh than his spirit by enjoying the promises of God. Weirsbe said, "We never read of Esau having a tent or an altar, and 26:34-35 indicates he loved worldly women. Hebrews 12:16 describes Esau as "profane" which means "of the world, common.""

8. According to God, which twin would serve the other? (This is an important fact to remember.)

9. Summarize verses 24-34. How were the twins different, both in appearance and personality? Why did Esau forfeit his birthright?

This is the first recorded birth of twins in the Bible, obviously not identical ones. (Since I have twin grandsons, twins intrigue me!) But this story has always amazed me. Why on earth would Esau give up his birthright, just because he was hungry? We're not going to spend much time on it because I want to focus more on their mom, but it's important to understand that this was no light matter. The birthright was a very valuable right of an older son. "Not only did it assure to its possessor a double share of his father's inheritance, but it carried with it a position of honor as head of the family as well." (Edith Deen) Although it was wrong of Jacob to get it the way he did, he understood the significance of the sacred birthright and the importance of it, and desired it. Esau thought of it as having no more value than a mouthful of food. I also wonder if he knew that in the end, Isaac favored him and would no doubt give him the blessing anyway.

10. If God had already given them a revelation that the younger son, Jacob, would carry on the Messianic line, why, then, do you think Abraham favored Esau, as we will continue to see?

11. Let's take this to heart. Why is it dangerous to favor one child over another? What can be some consequences of that? Do you struggle with this?

Tomorrow we will quickly skim over one of the mistakes Isaac and Rebekah made, before we get to the "big" one. See you then!

#### **Fourth Day**

**What's your verse? Will you "go" if the Lord tells you to?**

1. Read Genesis 26:1-35. Briefly summarize the story. Why did they leave? What sin did Isaac commit? Should Rebekah have gone along with it, or should she have stood up to him? Could she? (The apple didn't seem to fall far from the tree – read Genesis 12:10-20 and 20:1-5.)

2. It's sad, but his "lie" resulted in the same sad results that his parents received; a loss of blessing, loss of testimony, and a public rebuke by a pagan king. How does lying and deceitfulness ruin our testimony and bring shame to God? Do you know any verses to support this?
  
3. I'm going to ask you this question straight up ... are you lying to anyone, or about anything, right now? Are you guilty of trying to deceive a family member, boss, neighbor, or friend? Is there such a thing as a "white" lie? If you are guilty of lying, are you willing to repent and deal with the consequences?
  
4. In verses 34-35, what happened that brought Isaac and Rebekah grief?
  
5. Perhaps you have a child who married an unbeliever and you are experiencing "grief of mind" as they did. Will you continue to love them and pray faithfully for them, showing persistency like the Syrophenician woman we studied? Don't lose heart and don't lose hope. God is the God of the impossible!
  
6. Read Genesis 27:1-46. **Summarize** the story according to the section, and answer the questions listed:
  - a. Verses 1-4: What **WRONG** decision was Isaac about to make?
  
  - b. Verses 5-17: Why did Rebekah want to deceive Isaac? Why not just discuss it with him?
  
  - c. Verses 18-29: Why does Jacob go along with it? What blessings does he receive?



d. Verses 30-40: What blessing does Esau receive?

e. Verses 41-46: What was the result of all the lies?

What on earth happened? In this chapter, everybody does something wrong! Abraham seemed to forget that the younger son would receive the blessing and made a very bad parental decision; Rebekah knew the problem but chose a wrong solution; Jacob went along with his mom's deception; and Esau's heart was full of hate, even though he had made the decision long before to discard spiritual matters. How do we even unpack this? Where do we start? I don't think the problems we read about in this chapter developed in one single day. I think most of the problem stemmed from the day the twins were born and favorites were chosen. You can look at any of the characters and their "issues," but let's focus on Rebekah since she is the star of our lesson this week.

7. Rebekah knew God's promise would be fulfilled in Jacob, yet she decided to take matters into her own hands to make it happen. She seemed to doubt God's Word would come to pass unless she intervened. Are you guilty of doing the same? Are you impatient as you pray about a situation and tend to take matters into your own hands?
  
8. In earlier years, Rebekah and Isaac brought their burdens before the Lord. What do you think happened? Why didn't she do that again? Do you think it's possible that she rationalized her actions, telling herself that it was God's will for Jacob to inherit the blessing? Discuss how we can rationalize our actions and then twist Scripture or truth to back it up. So ... do you now, or have you ever done this?

9. Her actions led her to deceive her husband AND make her son a liar. What an example of how our sin affects others. Are you practicing some sinful behavior that is affecting those around you? As I meditated on this, the Holy Spirit reminded me that it doesn't have to be some "drastic" sin, but it could be as simple as complaining, and whining, or harboring bitterness...
10. If the Lord's promised us something in His Word, can anything thwart His will?  
(Daniel 4:35)

Rebekah's ultimate consequence was that after she advised Jacob to flee to her brother's house "for a few days" (verse 44), she never sees him again. You can continue to read the story, but Jacob stayed there for 20 years. We don't read anymore about Rebekah and her death isn't even recorded, but we know she dies before Jacob returns. Is there anything more tragic? (We do know she was buried in the field of Machpelah in the land of Canaan, with Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Leah according to Genesis 49:28-32.) We know that Jacob, who deceived his dad, was deceived by Laban and his own children. Our sin will certainly find us out (Numbers 32:23). And before we feel too sorry for Esau, Hebrews 12:17 lets us know that although he cried, he was not repentive for his sins, which were many.

Weirsbe wrote, "This is a clear evidence of God's sovereign election. His choice (of boys) was not based on the deeds of the boys, for they were unborn and had done neither good nor evil. As far as the type of character (strong, etc.) was concerned, Esau seemed to be the more acceptable of the two--yet Jacob was the one chosen by God (Ephesians 2:8-10)."

11. Read Romans 9:6-16. Write your thoughts. See you tomorrow!

### **Fifth Day**

**Write out your verse from memory.**

I know there was a lot of reading this week, and we skipped through it a bit gingerly. Let's recap a bit and discuss a few more points about Rebekah.

1. It appears that the favoritism must have been pretty obvious to the kids. Esau seemed to go out of his way to grieve his parents, which may have been a result of showing favoritism. Ponder this question together: How might the story have been different if they had been raised in a home "without partiality"?

Herbert Lockyer wrote, "Ambitious for her son, Rebekah sacrificed the love of her husband, the loss of the esteem of her elder son, and the peace of her soul, for the idolized son whose face she never saw again." Deen added, "She would spend her last years with a son who would always remember his mother's part in deceiving him and with a husband who naturally had lost some of the confidence he once had in her. And she and Isaac would continue to grieve over the actions of Esau's two Hittite wives." This story really breaks my heart.

2. Read Romans 3:8, Proverbs 19:5, Proverbs 31:10-12, and James 1:20. How do these verses relate to this story?
3. Samuel Morely once said, "I am much what my mother has made me." Write your thoughts. (Do you have a child? Is this true?)

It's sad to end by focusing on Rebekah's flaws, since we ALL have them. So let's look at some of the positive lessons we learned from her life, shall we?

4. When the servant first met Rebekah, what was she doing? (Did she seem to be afraid of hard work? Did she seem to be strong? Friendly? Hospitable? Write your thoughts. What do you think his first impression of her was?)

5. In the beginning, all Rebekah saw at the well that day was a person in need, and she was more than willing to help him. How about you? Do you have eyes that look for those in need around you, and then are you more than willing to help?
  
6. Rebekah said “I will go” which revealed much about her faith. Is there an “act of faith” you’re postponing, any step of faith you are delaying? We all know that “delayed obedience” is really disobedience. Thoughts?
  
7. Rebekah was willing to follow the servant to an unknown land, with an unknown future, to marry an unknown man. That’s pretty amazing. The question was posed to me by a commentator, so I’m posing it to you! “How would I describe my own devotion to God? My willingness to seek after and follow God’s will for my life? Am I actively following a God that loves me so? And I am willing to follow God as Rebekah was willing to follow God’s servant?”
  
8. What inspires you about Rebekah?
  
9. What convicts you about Rebekah?
  
10. What, if any, tendencies in Rebekah do you see in yourself?